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# XVIII

## MORALITY

183 IN discussing the question of morality it must be realized that we deal with responsible adults. One still repeatedly hears that 'the native is nothing but a grown-up child'; but in this sententious comparison the fallacy is now well enough recognized. It is indeed only in respect of education that the comparison might be said to hold good, and even so, we are probably guilty of underestimating the extent of tribal knowledge, which remains almost as much an undiscovered country to us as does our culture to the untutored savage. Still, granting as we must his cultural backwardness, he is in all essentials of character a grown man, and if any readers are disposed to doubt this view, they should search the faces shown in the earlier part of this book for any signs of puerility. The comparison of full-grown native with European child is on the whole misleading. Despite the obvious difference in cultural levels, he can only be fitly compared with the European adult; for the truth probably is that in all fundamentals he resembles us as closely in mind as he does in body, where the differences, however striking, are merely minute variations from a common pattern.

Granted this degree of mental approximation, we shall expect to find in the adult native the same groundwork of passions as in the European; and further, from the misdirection of those passions, anger, lust, greed, and the rest, into anti-social channels, we may expect to find the same major tendencies toward crime. And yet despite these full-blooded passions we do not find licence and anarchy. There is nothing to resemble the lawless savagery which popular imagination clothes with fur, and arms with the club of a 'cave-man'; on the contrary we find everywhere comparatively well-ordered, law-abiding and peaceful communities, whose internal life is possibly freer from strife than our own.

To what is this condition due? We shall have to deal in this chapter with native morality and the rudiments of

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law; and our subject may be divided roughly into two parts. There are first the norms, the ideals, the theoretical standards of morality, which, however dimly formulated in the native mind, are nevertheless to be discovered by observation of his conduct. These standards define the kinds of behaviour which, in relation to the society which has evolved them, are satisfactory, i.e. the kinds of behaviour which have been found to *work*. Selected by generations, they have been unconsciously designed to suit the narrow needs of family, clan, or tribal unit; they are essentially social norms, and they are meant to ensure the smooth running and happiness of social life. It is our first business then to formulate these standards—a work in which unfortunately we may look for little direct assistance from the native himself, who is not a preacher or a moralist. Now these standards, although there is no central authority to enforce them, are nevertheless observed with a large measure of fidelity; for the individual is so sunk in the social unit that he obeys its laws for the most part automatically. But no Orokaiva is perfect, nor is he absolutely under the thumb of the society he lives in, so that there is inevitably a falling-short of the standards; and our second task is therefore to discover what means Orokaiva society has of ensuring a fair degree of good conduct, of keeping the individual up to the scratch; in short what are the sanctions of Orokaiva morality.

### *The Sympathy Group*

The primitive ideal of conduct divides itself immediately and emphatically into two. There is first the question of proper conduct towards one's fellows within the group, and second the question of proper conduct towards those outside the group; or in a phrase there are the standards of *intra-group* and *extra-group* morality. These two—divergent as they are in civilized society—are found to be almost antithetical in primitive society. It might fairly be maintained that the sphere, i.e. the actual size of the group, within which the former standard holds good should constitute a fair criterion of moral advancement. It is true there are those who (with more or less sincerity) feel themselves members

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The distinction is simply between fellow men and men who are not fellows.

### *Extra-Group Morality*

Since the interest of this chapter will be principally with intra-group morality we may dismiss the other side of the question rather briefly. We have seen that the Orokaiva tribe lived in a state of ever-recurring warfare with some or other of its neighbours. There were peace-makings or truces, but the truce was always a fragile one, and no village lived in permanent security. The Orokaiva achieved and probably deserved a warlike reputation, and in such conditions it is not surprising that they should set some store upon the virtue of bravery—though it does not seem to take the foremost place that we might expect. A brave warrior was called *koropa-embo*, a 'spearman', or *ivu-embu*, a 'manly man', *ivu* being the word for husband or a fully matured man. Another term is *sarika*, which is perhaps best translated 'formidable', and connotes not only fierceness but size and strength. (By way of example one of the late magistrates of the Division was called *sarika* on account of stature, and another on account of his severity.) A coward is called *atoba-embo* or *jouro-buso*, and of course there are to be found some cowards among a generally brave race. Some of my informants in one village named a few men as *atoba* (and it is interesting to note in passing that, like true native gentlemen, they named them in whispers for fear the men in question should overhear and have their feelings hurt).

But more striking than any bravery is the sheer bloodthirstiness which seems actually to be raised to the status of a virtue. It is not for fearlessness that the insignia called *esa* or *otobu* (p. 177) are bestowed, but for the mere taking of human life. Many an old warrior, counting over his victims, will show as great a pride in the slaughter of women and children as in a man-to-man victory; and indeed the majority of Orokaiva victims have met their end in surprise and massacre rather than in fair fight. While I have found no evidence to show that the Orokaiva was expected some-

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183 554 time during his career to take a human life, as if this were a social imperative, it is not too much to say that every individual aspired to be a man-slayer, and that his success brought him a great deal of honour.

183 628 There can be no doubt, however, that revenge was regarded as an obligation, though the obligation might be fulfilled by any one of the victim's group, just as the vengeance itself might fall upon any one of the slayer's group, and not of necessity on the guilty man himself. Vengeance with its expressive name *diroga-mine*[1]—'an exchange of the spirits of the slain'—may have had a supernatural sanction behind it, viz. the possible anger of the unavenged *diroga*, though I have never heard such an explanation expressed; but at any rate the unpaid debt of blood probably entailed a painful sense of inferiority which could only be removed by the satisfaction of killing one of the aggressors.

183 727 Needless to say there were no conventions of war, no gratuitous mercy, and no sportingness. Men—young or old—were killed; old women were killed; young women might be raped and killed or borne off to become captive wives; children were killed or made prisoners. Though, on the other hand, there was no gratuitous cruelty, the victims were not tortured; and captive women and children were treated with kindness.

183 554 Treachery, of which one or two examples have been given (pp. 166–7), was not regarded as contemptible, and according to Beaver, as we have seen, one kind of homicidal emblem was specially assigned to the slayer of a peace emissary. Towards all outsiders the correct attitude was one of

183 609 suspicion if not always of hostility; a complete stranger wandering alone would be regarded both as potential enemy and good meat; and when visitors came in friendship, as at a feast, there was never any lack of warlike readiness on either side. The very cries of welcome which are so characteristic of the Orokaiva are possibly a sign of the dormant hostility between guest and host, being recognizable in one case at least as meant for reassurance of the former regarding the intentions of the latter.

[1] See p. 170.

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One feature—almost amusing—in the attitude toward outsiders is a propensity for objurgation—though one does not imply that the Orokaiva swear more ardently than other natives. But the gravest and sternest of men may work himself into a hoarse frenzy, and caper and gesticulate in a perfect abandonment of abuse when he is addressing the enemy on the opposite bank of the river; and strange to say (and here we see a complete contrast with intra-group morality) it is the 'strong-man' who swears the loudest and hurls defiance in the most boastful and abusive terms. The Aiga tribe are not ashamed but proud of their legendary reputation as 'strong-talkers' (p. 158).

Along with this hostility toward outsiders goes an intense pride in the group itself. This, in times of peace as well as war, finds expression in boasting and display. At the *esu*, which is a kind of mock warfare, the fierce harangues of the principals are composed of bragging and derision. They dwell continually on their prowess as fighters, on their mere strength of numbers, and on their material wealth. So much store is set upon the last-mentioned that it must be one of the highest satisfactions in the Orokaiva's life to set forth a great display of garden food and a number of fat pigs before the guests. Accordingly we must allow a place among the extra-group virtues to liberality, albeit by no means free from the taint of self-display. Moreover, one may always perceive a formal courtesy and an observance of all the somewhat noisy rites of hospitality when the guests arrive at a public function, although the several parties may be like tinder awaiting the spark. On the part of the guests themselves there is an almost impressive assumption of gravity while they file in amid the din of welcome, wearing expressions that may vary between complete indifference and a somewhat fierce sternness, but must never betray a glimmer of excitement, least of all a flattered smile. It is their way under the circumstances of evincing their corporate pride and dignity; so they maintain a reserve even in the face of hospitality, as if they almost grudged acknowledgement. But these milder virtues of extra-group morality are unsteady things. Let there be some cause

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rushing to the scene. On the whole we may say that the Orokaiva seldom fails in this duty of helping the members of his group.

A passive virtue, yet one which possibly ranks first in Orokaiva estimation, is that of *good temper*. I find no specific term for it, but the good-tempered man is called simply *javo-embo*, or 'good man'. A squabbler, a vituperator, or a bully is strongly disliked, and since it is these very propensities—even that of mere vituperation—which bring credit to a man when he directs them against the outsider, we see at once a contrast between intra-group and extra-group morality. A man of anger is *tumo-buso*, which could be said to mean literally 'liverish', but which in actuality implies something more fiery than mere crabbiness. A man is *jujumo-buso* if he is given to verbal quarrelling, and *embogi-buso* if he be an actual brawler. Such a one was Buninia, who some fifteen years ago was a noted warrior among the Aiga. With his great size and prowess a fierce temper combined to make him almost a terror to the neighbourhood. As a warrior he was named as particularly *sarika*; but his offensives were not always directed towards the legitimate enemy. He had stolen pigs and fought with neighbours in near-by villages, so that he is nowadays remembered as a strong man but a bad one. But usually there is very little that resembles bullying in a native village. To force a man to do one's will by personal violence is a thing that hardly enters the native's mind; and when a fisticuffs occur—which in fact is seldom—one ventures to believe it is only in the heat of anger. Between husband and wife it is somewhat different: a man may thrash a neglectful spouse in order to give her a better idea of her duties, though the corrective aspect is probably not very prominent when a man is belabouring his woman in a rage. All informants have agreed upon the justifiability of wife-beating, but they have all agreed that there are proper limits, and an habitual wife-beater has a bad name. I have seen children smacked, but never chastised, and would venture to say that when children are beaten it is only in anger and not with any cool intention of punishing them or improving them. I remem-

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ber noting the fondness of one man for his son, an attractive boy of six or seven years. Asked whether he ever beat the child he said, 'No; his first son had gone to work on a plantation and had died there. How could he beat his second son?' On the whole it may be said that the Orokaiva hold up good temper and kindness as a virtue, a thing which society demands from the individual; and on the whole, again, they carry out that ideal to a greater extent than is popularly supposed.

Along with this ideal goes that of *dignity* or weight, very much akin to the classical *gravitas*. A man is admired if he can make his personality felt, but in so doing he must not make a nuisance of himself. He may fulminate against the enemy, and will even be praised for it; but at home he does better to play the role of strong silent man. Such characters are undoubtedly admired, though one cannot profess to discover any consistent expression of the ideal. The gravest *paterfamilias* will on occasion cast aside restraint and become a ranter, and does so, too, without losing his dignity in the eyes of the village. But a chatterbox, or one who reveals his excitability too frequently, is under ordinary circumstances regarded as a bore.

Another ideal is that of *courtesy*, and by this I mean something wider than mere politeness. Indeed, of formal politeness as we know it ourselves there is rather a conspicuous absence. The Orokaiva is off-hand when he does a kindness, and apparently indifferent when he receives one. He does not offer his friend a betel-nut with a bow and a smile, but throws it surlily across; and the friend does not say thank you, but picks it up and tears the husk off with his teeth, vouchsafing neither word nor even look to the man who gave it. But—and this is the best thing we can say of the native—there is a very high and constant regard for others' feelings. Towards the enemy you may point the fingers and twist or screw the hand in the infamous gesture called *gingi gongo*, and call him the child of a devil-devil, or even tell him he has a scraggy neck; but it is only in the extremity of rage that a man would insult his clansman or fellow villager. To point at a man is out of taste; to swear at him would be to

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provoke an open breach; to gibe at his personal deformity would be the last blow. Baldness, for instance, is regarded as unseemly and ridiculous; but there are no Elishas and no mocking children. It is not of course to be supposed that men of the same group never bandy words, yet rudeness and abuse are always deprecated. Ordinarily the native, who is keenly enough alive to the peculiarities of his fellow, will only refer to them behind his back, and this for no other reason than to avoid doing injury to his feelings. Roughness or rudeness is said to produce in its victim that emotion, or complex of emotions, called *meb*, which we usually and somewhat inadequately translate 'shame', and it is regarded as a serious thing; so much so that if a man commits an unjustifiable affront, not only does the victim suffer, but the culprit's fellows, who feel they share his responsibility, will be positively covered with vicarious *meb*.

We may now turn to the consideration of *practical honesty*. One cannot claim that there is here any high abstract ideal. The native certainly feels no moral obligation to tell the truth in all circumstances—as who should know better than one who spends his time in questioning them? But honesty is a virtue at least in the limited and practical sense of respect for property. Petty thieving is common enough and is treated with a good deal of tolerance, though, considering the absolutely unguarded condition in which property is commonly left, the general honesty of a native village may impress one rather favourably, and would certainly bear comparison with that of a civilized community. It is probably true that as European influence first extends among a primitive people, the decrease in crimes of violence is more than countered by an increase in thieving and other crimes of stealth, and whatever the cause of this latter condition, it implies the decay of one primitive virtue. It is at any rate the common experience of Europeans that the more sophisticated natives are more inclined to steal.

Lastly, we may refer briefly to *married chastity*. Among the Orokaiva a woman is expected to be faithful, even during long absences of her husband. There is no bartering or lending of wives, and the only exception is during the cere-

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831 monial licence that follows an initiation ceremony (p. 192). The question of how far this rule of chastity is regarded or disregarded in practice does not concern us for the moment; the fact of interest is that adultery is considered an offence; so that those, particularly women, who are known to commit the offence habitually are generally despised and compared to dogs. There is, of course, no such restriction
836 upon the unmarried, though it has been observed elsewhere that young people do not give their passions an entirely free rein. As for continence in itself, I cannot find that it is
831 ever regarded as virtuous in any degree, unless it be enjoined by some ceremonial necessity.

### *Summary of Intra-Group Morality*

577 The foregoing does not claim to be more than a frag-
183 mentary list of native virtues. However, it covers enough ground to allow us to see the general trend of Orokaiva ethics. The group, as we have seen, lives within itself a peaceful and contented life. It cherishes no distant and ambitious ideal of progress, but contents itself with two main requirements—(1) material plenty, and (2) internal concord. The individual must fit himself into this scheme, for the virtues enumerated above are essentially social. There is little, if any, idea of a self-centred righteousness. On the contrary, each virtue implies agent and reagent. Not incontinence, for instance, but adultery is condemned, because a right of possession has been infringed; not gluttony, but greed, because others must suffer by it. In fact the norms of individual conduct have been evolved to meet the needs of society, to satisfy its ideal of a somewhat passive well-being. The moral factors in this ideal are, on the positive side, Liberality, Industry, and Helpfulness; on the negative, Good Temper, Dignity, Courtesy, Practical Honesty, and Married Chastity. They might be summed up in two terms, if we allow them their widest meaning, viz. (1) co-operation and (2) self-restraint, which are the two main moral requirements that correspond with the two main social requirements of material plenty and internal concord.

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### *Attempts at Standardization*

Native morality is for the most part inexplicit; we do not expect to find an established code, and it is mainly by observing conduct and its apparent reaction on the public mind that we arrive at any general principles. But it is worth mentioning the few incipient traces of standardization. The foregoing list of virtues will call to mind the *otobu* ideal, the character of the *otobu-embo*, and the instructions which are given to the youth or girl who receives the emblem (pp. 191, 204, 205). Apart from being urged on to deeds of valour, the recipient was enjoined, with more insistence perhaps, to observe the milder social virtues which would make him an amenable or respectable member of the group. Such versions as I heard of the moral instruction given at the *otobu* ceremony were possibly somewhat abbreviated, but their tone was consistent, and it is fair to say that the *otobu* injunctions are a brief *précis* of social morality, and would thus constitute a standardization, albeit only transmissible by word of mouth.

There is a word *iggo* (Binandele *jogo*) which may be translated 'moral law', or perhaps, since the examples are all negative, 'moral prohibition'. The examples were such as the following: not to steal a man's vegetables, canoes, spears, &c.; not to usurp his fishing rights; not to take his dog to hunt, but to drive it back if it followed the hunter of its own accord; not to commit adultery; not to beat one's wife overmuch; not to commit assault on another man. These *iggo* were for adults; they did not apply to children, who had to be treated with so much indulgence; still less to dogs, whose nature it was to steal on sight. While not implying standardization, the mere existence of the word hints at a definite conception of right and wrong.

With respect to property it is worth noting under this head the various tangible protection marks. Whatever their sanctions they have no real value as physical barriers to trespass or appropriation.

(1) The commonest is *papava* or *esa*, the frond of coco-nut palm tied about the butt, which means that no one is to

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

# SOCIAL CONTROL AMONGST THE OROKAIVA

By MARIE REAY

*Introduction*

"Orokaiva" is a general term denoting people speaking Binandele and related dialects who occupy a large part of the Northern Division of Papua. Orokaiva society was investigated in some detail in the 1920's by the late Dr. F. E. Williams, Government Anthropologist. This article is based upon data furnished in Dr. Williams' published work,[1] supplemented by observations recorded by the author during a brief field period early in 1951 which was interrupted by the eruption of Mt. Lamington. My own observations refer to the Wasida or Jegase Sarahu tribe,[2] whereas some of Dr. Williams' information was gathered from the Aiga, Binandele and Tain Daware tribes, which are situated in other parts of the Division but nevertheless reveal a social organization practically identical with that of the Wasida people.

In investigating social control amongst the Orokaiva, three aspects will be examined which would seem to be important in any empirical study of social control. Firstly, there are the ideals people expect one another to try to live up to: the Orokaiva use the convenient term *otohu* to refer to these. Secondly, it is necessary to study education in conformity, which involves a consideration of Orokaiva childhood and an examination of the ritual of initiation from this point of view. Thirdly, there are the actual sanctions operating to encourage conformity with Orokaiva ideals. There will be an attempt, finally, to assess the effectiveness of this system.

## (1) OROKAIVA IDEALS

The Orokaiva term *otohu* is perhaps midway between behaviour which is normally expected and that which is ideally desirable. This term is used in two senses: adjectivally, it indicates that the person so described is well-behaved in certain definite ways and, secondly, it signifies an honorific ornament worn by a large number of people. A man is *otohu* if he is generous and helpful, and is diligent in gardening and hunting[3]; also, the *otohu* man does not quarrel or brawl, he does not steal, nor does he commit adultery. A woman is *otohu* if she listens to her husband and does not speak to him angrily, if she is faithful to him and accompanies him wherever

[1] F. E. Williams, "Plant-Emblems Among the Orokaiva," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LV, 1925; *Orokaiva Magic* (1928); *Orokaiva Society* (1930).

[2] Called the Jegasa-Saraa tribe by E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver (*Papuan Annual Report* for 1914-15, pp. 158 ff.).

[3] *I.e.*, if he is able to vary the diet of his household occasionally with food from the bush, and if he works his garden regularly.

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



he goes, and if she does not steal from the other women. Orokaiva society is organized about the men and the expression of their personalities. To be *otohu*, a man has to be generous; what is required of the woman is that she should concur in her husband's generosity. Wealth is valued, because the possession of enough pigs and a good supply of taro makes it possible for a man to hold a feast. Holding feasts is the epitome of generosity, which is the most important Orokaiva virtue. Men are encouraged to be highly individualistic. Women are individualistic, too, but this seems to be a by-product of male individualism.

The *otohu* ornaments, which are worn by many, are presented during the initiation ceremony to some of the novitiates, but they may be acquired later, on payment of a pig. They were largely homicidal insignia in former times. Some of them still signify that the wearer has killed a pig, but mostly they are ornaments which express the wearer's preparedness to enact the virtues listed above.

How far do the Orokaiva conform to the *otohu* virtues? They are generous and helpful to one another. They work their gardens regularly enough to ensure a plentiful supply of vegetable products from the fertile earth. Apparently adultery takes place rarely, although some of the women habitually accuse their husbands of fornication. Stealing is rare. But the Orokaiva men quarrel and brawl, and the Orokaiva women use "strong talk" to their husbands. So long as the individual does this only occasionally, he or she can still claim to be *otohu*. I have stressed the *otohu* virtues to make it clear that the norm in Orokaiva society is not in conformity with minimum legal requirements, but an approximation to ideal standards.

As well as conforming to the *otohu* ideals, an adult male is expected to be strong and fearless. This expectation is largely unverbalized, excepting in reminiscences of the idealized past. The Orokaiva have a bloody background of constant warfare with the Managalasi and the Togaho as well as continual internecine strife. The war leaders, fearless and fearsome, are greatly admired in retrospect and are held up to the young boys as examples of ideal personalities to emulate. When an institution loses influence and even disintegrates or becomes extinct, motivations continue to be patterned in accordance with them. Warfare happens no longer,[4] so to-day much of the training of Orokaiva boys is anachronistic, because of this "subjective lag."

### (2) Education in Conformity

Viewed as a process which implements social control by teaching what norms should be adhered to and what are the consequences of aberrant behaviour, education presents three important aspects: Firstly, it involves the *internalization of norms or ideal patterns*. We are concerned with discovering the values held by adults to be important enough to impress upon the growing child. There are the explicit values, and in studying how these are impressed upon the child we should look for implicit values which are incidentally transmitted. Education occurs within the field of adult-child interaction, which is inevitably authoritative in some respects. In as

[4] Monckton, in the *Papuan Annual Report* for 1904, reports that the pacification of the tribes of this area was accomplished in that year.